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1800-1900



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1800 to 1900

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WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
TEN WEST EIGHTH STREET · NEW YORK

A CENTURY OF AMERICAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

A RACE busy taming the wilderness, wresting a living from the sea, and building a new nation, had little time or surplus wealth for more than the bare necessities of life. The only art for which there was any demand in colonial America was portraiture. The provincial aristocrat had no desire for the higher forms of art, but he wanted himself and his family recorded for posterity. In the words of Benjamin Robert Hayden, disillusioned English exponent of the grand style: "Portraiture is always independent of art and has little or nothing to do with it. It is one of the staple manufactures of the Empire. Wherever the British settle, wherever they colonize, they carry, and will always carry, trial by jury, horse racing and portrait painting."

Least of all was there any demand for landscape, a quite non-utilitarian form of art, which tells no story, illustrates no historical event, points no moral. The motivation of landscape is as impractical as that of lyric poetry or music—the expression of the artist's vision of nature and the emotions which it arouses in him. This love of nature is the product of an old and settled civilization, not a pioneer one. It had little place in the hard-headed America of colonial days.

Nevertheless a few landscapes were produced in eighteenth century America. Painters sometimes advertised that they could do not only portraits but landscapes. The obituary of Nathaniel Emmons of Boston in 1740 said that "some of his Pieces are such admirable imitations of nature, both in faces, River Banks, and Rural Scenes that the pleased Eye can not easily leave them." John Smibert at his death in 1751 left in his studio thirteen "landskips" which were appraised at only £2.13. But the few eighteenth century landscapes that have come down to us are mostly topographical views of cities or other points of interest, not far removed from maps and having not much more aesthetic interest.

Portraits occasionally had landscape backgrounds. A Boston merchant might be pictured next to a window with a glimpse of the sea and a distant ship, to indicate where his wealth came from. Or there would be a view of conventionalized trees and sky, evidently copied from an engraving rather than nature. The earliest American painter who showed a genuine feeling for nature was the Connecticut portrait-painter Ralph Earl, who had a habit of placing a sitter near an open window through which could be seen a view of the local countryside. Such a background differed from those of his predeces-

sors in that it was a particular place associated with the sitter and was as much a portrait as the rest of the picture. Twice at least, Earl painted pure landscapes, notably the large *Looking East From Leicester Hills* now owned by the Worcester Art Museum. Painted in 1800 for a client and representing the view from his farm, it was said by an early commentator to have "great fidelity of representation," to be expected in a portrait-painter. But the largeness of its design and the graceful way in which the view was framed by trees on either side, were the product of Earl's own decorative instinct. The more concentrated views in his portraits have the precision, delicacy and spare elegance characteristic of much early American painting, and they make one regret that Earl did not more often turn his talent to pure landscape.

Probably the first landscape painter in this country, in the sense of an artist who painted chiefly landscapes, was Francis Guy, an eccentric Englishman who came to America in 1795, settling in Baltimore. In England he had been a tailor, silk-dyer, inventor, and jack-of-all-trades. In America he added painting to his other accomplishments. Rembrandt Peale is authority for the statement that Guy learned to paint by stretching a piece of black gauze over a window, and tracing with chalk the objects seen through it. He seems to have been successful with his landscapes, boasting about 1808 that "the principal connoisseurs in America approve and recommend my pictures. Last spring, in Baltimore only, I disposed of paintings to the amount of \$1,500." He specialized particularly in painting country estates around Baltimore, probably commissioned by the gentry as other artists were commissioned to paint their portraits. His pictures featured the owner's mansion, shown at some distance, surrounded by lawn and trees and fields, with the owner himself promenading with his family. Although somewhat naïve, these works had a natural elegance, a preciseness and delicacy in the details, a liveliness in the little figures. Guy had the eighteenth century conception of nature as a setting for the human being, and his masterpiece, the *Brooklyn Snow Scene* in the Brooklyn Museum, is Bruegel-like in its crowding of townspeople engaged in all kinds of activities.

For the first quarter of the nineteenth century portraiture still held its sway, although there was a certain broadening of the subjects that artists could paint and still manage to survive. A few of the more imaginative attempted classical or religious subjects, and sometimes landscape. But the young republic gave small encouragement to such flights. Even such a patriotic artist as John Trumbull found little support for his scenes of the Revolution. Several times he attempted landscape, notably the two views of

Niagara Falls now owned by the Wadsworth Atheneum, painted as studies for a panorama which was never executed. As a young man, eager to take up the career of art, Trumbull had tried to win over his stern father by dwelling upon the honor paid to artists in Greece and Rome, and had met with the rejoinder, "You appear to forget, Sir, that *Connecticut is not Athens*." "How often," he wrote as a disillusioned old man, "have those few impressive words occurred to my memory!"

The early conception of landscape was the portraiture of particular places. The first American painter to break away from this was Washington Allston. Of brilliant intellect, romantic temperament, and keen sensibilities, Allston received the best education of the day, doing the grand tour in Europe, living four years in Rome under the spell of Raphael and Michelangelo, and becoming the intimate friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth. As a young man in England he did his finest work, mostly of Biblical and classical subjects, including a number of landscapes based on the scenery of Switzerland and Italy modified by his reminiscences of the old masters. It was in London about 1817 that he painted the extraordinary *Elijah Fed by the Ravens*. It is a scene such as could exist only in the mind of a romantic poet, with a strangeness and remoteness that suggest the poetry of Coleridge; while at the same time it is the creation of a highly gifted plastic artist, familiar with the great art of the world. It reveals Allston as the first imaginative American landscapist, the first to paint landscape which was not merely a portrait of a place, but which possessed the elements of universality and creative imagination.

Allston's later work did not bear out this brilliant promise. Leaving England when he was at the top of his reputation and settling in Boston, away from the stimulus of artistic contacts, his creative instincts became atrophied. His was primarily a poetic temperament, lacking the broad humanity to succeed in the classical and Biblical themes that he considered alone worthy. One feels that his true bent was the strange and the non-human, and that he would have done well to have given himself up to the painting of imaginative landscape rather than the frigid rhetoric of neoclassicism.

In the career of Allston's friend and pupil, Samuel F. B. Morse, was repeated the experience of his predecessors. Returning from his years abroad, full of ambition "to be among those who shall revive the splendor of the fifteenth century," he soon found that the classic subjects he had painted in England were admired in this country but that no one bought them or gave him commissions for similar themes. By necessity he became one of America's most distinguished portrait-painters. But his desire for other themes per-

sisted, and he frequently painted landscape. Morse's fine balance between classicism and realism is evident in these landscapes, with their wide vistas and orderly design, combined with an engaging feeling for the less formal aspects of nature. Something of the eighteenth century lingers in them, while the freshness of observation and brushwork belong to a later date. In middle life Morse abandoned the ungrateful career of a moderately paid portrait-painter to devote the rest of his life to his invention of the telegraph. But he did it with regret, and always grieved over it.

The careers of Trumbull, Allston, Morse, and other artists who attempted to break away from the yoke of portrait-painting, proved that America of the early nineteenth century killed the higher imaginative faculty in her artists. Their best work was done in the enthusiasm of their youth and under the stimulus of foreign study and travel. Returning to America, they soon found the atmosphere too bare and utilitarian to keep their imaginations from starving. The only artists who managed to survive were tough specimens like Stuart, who confined themselves to portrait-painting. So that the few landscapes painted during the first quarter of the nineteenth century were the occasional work of artists prominent in other fields. The wonder is that they managed to produce so much that was fresh and individual.

II

The beginnings of the first native landscape school in America, the Hudson River school, coincided with the rise about 1830 of Jacksonian democracy, with its strongly nativist sentiment. Our colonial dependence on Europe was being replaced by a new self-confidence, though still crude and bumptious. The enormous westward expansion of the country was bringing an increased realization of the wonders of the American continent—its vast size, its infinite resources, its spectacular natural phenomena.

At the same time there was a growth in city life. A comfortable bourgeois class was arising whose interest in art, though still provincial, went beyond the perpetuation of their own faces. This bourgeoisie, like that of Holland in the seventeenth century, had a liking for landscape—possibly the city-dweller's compensation for the increasing complexity and ugliness of urban life, an escape into what seemed a simpler and purer world.

The pioneer of the Hudson River school was Thomas Doughty, who followed a respectable business career until the age of almost thirty, when "to the surprise and disappointment of his friends" he became a painter—and what was worse, a landscape painter. But the change in artistic conditions

was shown by the fact that for a time in the 1830s he was fairly successful, being rated as the foremost painter in his field until the rise of more spectacular talents. Doughty loved the placid and peaceful aspects of nature, and painted them with a quiet pastoral charm that still makes him one of the most engaging of our landscapists.

Doughty, however, was only a forerunner. The honor of being the founder of our first native landscape school belongs to an artist who was not native-born. Thomas Cole was born in England and spent his boyhood there "in the sweet indulgence of sentiment and fancy," as his biographer tells us. He was a shy youth, given to reading romantic literature, writing poetry, and playing the flute. When he was eighteen, his family came to America, settling in Ohio, where in the solitude of the virgin forest the impressionable years of Cole's youth were spent, and where he began to express on canvas the sentiments inspired by nature and his reading. It was not until he came to New York in 1825 that he met with any encouragement. Here the ground was prepared for him; Cooper was writing his novels of the American forest, and Bryant was composing his solemn nature poems. With both Cole had much in common. His literary bent was strong, and he approached American scenery in a highly romantic spirit. He was the first to embody in pictorial form the cult of the wilderness. He was enamored of the wild and untamed character of America, the solitude of her forests, the lordliness of her rivers, the purity of her lakes, the grandeur of her mountains, the blazing colors of her autumn foliage, her crystal air and cold high skies. In later years Bryant wrote: "I well remember what an enthusiasm was awakened by these early works of his—the delight which was expressed at the opportunity of contemplating pictures which carried the eye over scenes of wild grandeur peculiar to our country, over our aerial mountain-tops, with their mighty growth of forests never touched by the axe, along the banks of streams never deformed by culture, and into the depths of skies bright with the hues of our own climate; skies such as few but Cole could ever paint, and through the transparent abysses of which it seemed that you might send an arrow out of sight."

Cole's viewpoint on the American scene was colored by a Byronic imagination. Nature appealed to him only in her grandest aspects. Simple hills assumed Alpine proportions, gentle slopes became beetling crags, ivy-covered ruins and medieval castles appeared on every height, and a stormy and melodramatic light was cast over the face of nature. And there was a strong tendency towards moralism. Cole was interested in nature not only for herself but for the sake of Christian virtues. His journal reveals a religious tem-

perament prone to pessimistic reflections on the vanity of all human affairs. These ideas he embodied in several series of paintings such as *The Departure* and *The Return*, showing a knight gaily leaving his castle in the morning and borne home in the evening dead; or *The Voyage of Life*, in which we follow man down the River of Life through Childhood, Youth, Manhood and Old Age; or the most famous of all, *The Course of Empire*, which illustrated his melancholy theories of the vanity of worldly pleasure and power and the inevitable and satisfactory destruction that overtakes them. These moralities appealed to the Victorian taste that delighted in graveyards and weeping willows. Undoubtedly their admixture of moral and religious sentiment helped to popularize landscape painting with a generation that always had to find some moral justification for art.

With all his absurdity, Cole remains one of the most vital of American landscape painters. His worst pictures were in atrocious taste, but his best work was large in conception, full of vigor and movement, and with a compelling dramatic quality. He was the first to paint the American wilderness with a full appreciation of its picturesqueness, and he caught some of the wild beauty of this western continent as it was a century ago.

Although Cole died young, before the middle of the century, he had lived to see the growth of a native landscape school. Next to himself as its leader was Asher B. Durand, who at the age of forty gave up a successful career as an engraver and portrait-painter to devote himself to landscape. Durand was of French Huguenot descent, with all the industry, sobriety and commonsense of his stock. He approached nature with little of Cole's romanticism but rather in the spirit of the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, with a grave affection and an honest devotion to truth. Working often direct from nature, his painstaking hand put in every detail—the lichened tree-trunks, the vine-covered rocks, the weeds and flowers in the foreground. While apt to be over-literal and encumbered with detail, his work was always solid and strong, and its sense of direct communion with nature keeps it alive today. His larger panoramic canvases are usually very dull, but the more intimate studies of woodland interiors with fallen trees and quiet brooks have a sober poetry that the years have not lessened.

Cole's grandiose romanticism and Durand's literal naturalism were the chief influences on the younger painters of the Hudson River school. The members of the group were intimate friends, went on painting and walking trips together, and had common enthusiasms and limitations. They were tremendously proud of the natural beauty of this country. They loved to tramp its mountains, to breathe its clear air, to wander in its forests. In spite

of their veneration for the ruins and romantic associations of Europe, they were not prepared to yield anything to any foreign country. They must have heartily approved of that bumptious comparison in one of Cooper's novels: "A fairer morning never dawned upon the Alleghenies than that which illumined the Alps."

All of them visited Europe, though usually when they were mature. There they admired the old masters, particularly Claude Lorrain, Poussin and Salvatore Rosa. Among contemporaries Turner's romanticism affected them more than Constable's realism. Corot and the Barbizon painters, still considered radical in France, might not have existed as far as they were concerned. On the whole they remained more provincial than their predecessors like Allston, Vanderlyn and Morse, or their successors Inness and Martin. Most of them returned home to paint the Catskills and the White Mountains much as they had painted them before.

Like Cole, they believed that the nobler the subject was, the nobler the picture would be. In the typical Hudson River landscape the canvas is enormous, the subject grandiose, the viewpoint panoramic, embracing all the natural features within range of the eye. At the same time, so minute is the handling that one can see every leaf. The color is brown and sadly lacking in freshness and observation. The technique is thin and meager, but within its limitations almost inhumanly proficient, with a high finish that reminds one of the rosewood and plush furniture of the period.

The art world of their day was comparatively small and unsophisticated. There were no great fortunes like those of a few decades later, but a few wealthy men took an interest in art, and relations between artist and patron were more personal than today. Art criticism hardly existed, the dealer was practically unknown, and little foreign art was imported. Taste was more home-made than it has ever been since. The Hudson River painters spoke a language that their audience understood, and they received more substantial support than any other similar group in our history. None of them starved, and the leaders of the school enjoyed ample incomes.

The most prominent was John F. Kensett, who had a more extensive European experience than most of the others, spending seven years abroad in his youth, taking long walking and painting trips in Switzerland and Italy. In America he kept up his wandering habits and explored and painted the whole eastern section of the country, so that his work had great variety in subject. Like his colleagues he painted many huge canvases that were stilted and dull, but his less conventional pictures were remarkable in their day for their intimacy and bare honesty. Primarily a realist, he had the truest eye

of all the school, and his direct, fresh observation set him apart from the rest. Probably owing to his European training, his sense of form and color was more developed than that of the others, and there was a sureness in his draftsmanship and a glow in his color that they lacked. In his own day he was immensely popular, and he still remains one of our most gifted painters.

The grandiose tradition that Cole had started reached its culmination in the period after the Civil War. It was a time of immense material expansion. Industrialization was proceeding apace, railroads were spreading their network over the country, the Far West was being opened. Exploring expeditions were penetrating the region of the Rockies, most of them accompanied by artists who brought back records of that vast new country. The first transcontinental railroad was being built amid increasing popular excitement, until the "wedding of the rails" linked the Atlantic and the Pacific. It was this period that saw the rise of the first great American fortunes, made in railways, steamboats, and mines, and the spending of part of these fortunes on huge new houses, hideous furniture, and paintings.

This Gilded Age demanded an art that would satisfy the new craving for "the biggest thing on earth." Pictures must be big in every way—big subjects, big canvases, big frames, big prices. The work of Frederick E. Church and Albert Bierstadt was a response to this demand. Church followed the grandiose example of Cole, whose only pupil he had been. His enormous paintings pictured the natural marvels of the western hemisphere—Niagara Falls, the Rocky Mountains, the volcanoes and jungles of Central and South America. His experiences in Labrador were recorded by an admiring friend in a book called *After Icebergs with a Painter*. An indefatigable worker, he pursued natural phenomena with a scientist's zeal. As a writer of the time observed: "He has long been attracted by the electrical laws of the atmosphere, and has improved every opportunity to study the Aurora Borealis." The technical skill of his pictures is astounding; the panorama covered is even more extensive than Cole's, while every detail, every phenomenon of light and atmosphere, is rendered with photographic accuracy. The final effect is that of immense picture postcards, but to the generation that arose to sudden wealth in the 'seventies and 'eighties they were altogether admirable, and enormous prices were paid for them.

If Church lacked the sentiment of the primitives of the Hudson River school, he was still a romantic compared to Albert Bierstadt, who first came to the public attention with what was described as "a grand historical and geographical picture" of the Rocky Mountains. Of German birth and training, though brought up in this country, Bierstadt painted mostly the Far

West, in enormous canvases—larger even than Church's—executed with the mechanical proficiency of the Düsseldorf school. The tottering heights of snow-clad mountains, the miles of space, stun the mind but leave the emotions untouched. His work represents the culmination of the spectacular side of the Hudson River school, but by this time everything in the school that was of value as art had evaporated. Like most of the grandiose paintings of the school, Bierstadt's work is a supreme example of the popular fallacy that a noble and beautiful subject makes a noble and beautiful picture. These stupendous achievements, the wonders of an uncritical generation, now seem to have little more artistic interest than the photographs and travel films that were so soon to take their place.

The last representative of Cole's tradition was also an Englishman by birth, Thomas Moran. Brought up in America, Moran returned to England as a young man and there came under the spell of Turner. In this country he devoted himself to picturing on huge canvases the scenery of the Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. Unlike Bierstadt and Church, his aim was not the literal representation of a scene so much as the dramatic interpretation of it—the grand effect, the atmospheric appearances, and in particular the amazing color of the Far West. His style was warm and romantic, full of movement and color. Like the other representatives of the grandiose school he suffers from a fundamental fallacy of viewpoint; but of all the painters of the Far West he came nearest to expressing its grandeur.

With Church and Bierstadt and Moran the Hudson River school ended in a blaze of glory. The social changes that had helped to create the grandiose style eventually brought about its end. The first naïve expansiveness of the new plutocracy was over and they were beginning to learn discretion in artistic matters. As wealth and leisure increased and the second generation came upon the scene, a new sophistication appeared. Foreign art was increasingly imported, and in comparison with the latest salon pictures even Bierstadt seemed provincial. The surviving members of the Hudson River school still painted and exhibited at the Academy, but to the younger artists who were returning from the Beaux-Arts their work was an occasion for merriment and little more.

III

George Inness was of the same generation as the younger Hudson River painters, but in every other respect he was their opposite. Highly emotional, his restless and searching temperament caused him to break with the old

school. His early work, painted direct from nature and with practically no training, was in the old-fashioned tight, panoramic style. But it failed to satisfy him. His instincts called for something richer and freer. In mid-century America, however, there was little basis for comparison with great art. In later years Inness said that it was some engravings after old masters that opened his eyes. "They were nature, rendered grand instead of being belittled by trifling detail and puny execution. I commenced to take them out to nature with me, to compare them with her as she really appeared, and the light began to dawn."

A further liberation came with two trips to Italy in his twenties. That immemorial country, mellowed by centuries of cultivation, gave Inness a new conception of civilized landscape, of the deep harmony between man and nature, contrasting with the romantic wilderness cult of the Hudson River painters. The work he did in Italy was distinguished by a new ripeness and sense of order, that set it apart from anything being painted in America at that time. A still more decisive influence came from a stay in France in the middle 1850's, which brought him into contact with the Barbizon school. Here were artists actually achieving what he had instinctively struggled for—breadth of vision, richness of color. Instead of the older grandiose viewpoint here was a feeling for the intimate aspects of nature. Instead of the romantic love of solitude and wildness and picturesqueness, here was a sense of nature as something lived with and loved, not for its spectacular qualities but for the familiar beauty of meadows and woods, streams and hills, farm-houses and pastures, seen in sunshine or shower, at sunrise or sunset. This change to a more intimate viewpoint was to be Inness's special contribution to the modern conception of landscape painting.

Another contribution was a new subjectivism, a freer expression of the artist's own emotions. "The true purpose of the painter," Inness said, "is simply to reproduce in other minds the impression which the scene has made upon him. A work of art is not to instruct, not to edify, but to awaken an emotion." As his style developed this emotionalism colored his vision more and more, until in his latest work the subjective element rather than objective reality had become the real content of his art.

In Inness's hands the literal copying of nature leaf by leaf gave way to broad simplification. The dark browns of the Hudson River painters changed into a palette richer not only in sensuous appeal but in the ability to create form and depth. Inness saw everything in terms of color, and as he matured color became the predominant element in his work. The Hudson River men had painted nature without much variety of light or atmosphere. To them

objects had been more important than the light and air that bathed them. Inness was much more sensitive to such matters, and showed a growing interest in weather, time of day, and the changing moods of nature, and an increasing subtlety in picturing them. Indeed, his emphasis on such effects became even greater than that of the Barbizon school, until in his latest work they were at least equally as important to him as structure. The scene was enveloped in a soft rich haze through which light fell on objects suggested in the broadest manner. This latest style had something in common with that of the impressionists, but Inness never shared their semi-scientific attitude or their brilliant palette. He stands midway between the Barbizon painters and the impressionists, but closer to the former.

Inness's innovations at first met with only criticism and ridicule in America, and for many years he stood almost alone in his advocacy of the new style. The Vasari of the period, Henry T. Tuckerman, who had nothing but praise for the Hudson River painters, felt that "sometimes his manner overleaps the modesty of nature, and license takes the place of freedom." The older American painters' opinions of the Barbizon school, as given in a book published as late as 1879, were: "I can't think anything of Corot. I can't understand him. . . . Half the foreign stuff sold here is a swindle on the public. . . . Beauty in tone, in harmony, we can all recognize at a glance, but I can't see where Corot's *Orpheus* has it." Up to the time he was fifty Inness enjoyed no such popularity as the Hudson River men. But from that time on came increasing recognition, and in the last years of his life he was generally considered the leading landscape painter of the country.

The works of this last period, with their breadth of handling, richness of color, intimate feeling for nature and sensitiveness to her moods, marked the distance that American landscape painting, as embodied in its foremost exponent, had travelled since the days of Cole and Durand. It is true that they were the work of a lyrical rather than a structural painter, and that the vision revealed in them was not always of the most distinguished order. Inness expressed emotions about nature common to most of humanity, but expressed them with such mastery that his work will always be valid. He remains not only the greatest pioneer in our landscape painting and the one who exercised the widest influence, but also the most many-sided, the most pleasing, and on the whole the most vital.

A similar evolution was followed by Inness's younger colleagues Alexander Wyant and Homer Martin. Wyant, brought up in Ohio without artistic contacts, at twenty-one saw some pictures by Inness and made the long trip to New York to seek his advice. His early work was directly in the Hudson

River tradition, but he developed towards more intimate subjects, with a subtle feeling for light and atmospheric envelopment. His color was silvery, in a key of delicate grays and gray-greens, his sentiment reserved and rather melancholy. Remaining close to a naturalistic viewpoint, never achieving the full freedom of Inness, he embodied in a more limited way the transition from the earlier to the later style.

Homer Martin, born and brought up in Albany, almost entirely self-taught, spending his youth tramping the Adirondacks and the Catskills, began at an early age to paint this mountain country in a style close to that of the Hudson River artists. But his work from the beginning was free from their grandiloquence, having a sensitiveness and an austere realism that they lacked. His vision was that of a man who since boyhood had known the country he painted, so that it was part of his blood, of his unconscious mind. A penetrating sense of solitude made these early pictures a more intense expression of the spirit of the wilderness than the work of Cole and his followers.

Martin was extremely independent, not easily influenced, and his development was slow but consistent. Not until he was almost thirty did he move to New York; not until forty did he make his first trip abroad. As he matured and had wider contacts with other art, his early literal, panoramic manner changed to a more intimate style, in which color played a large part. A contemplative temperament, in whom conceptions took a long time to mature, he did his best work from images that had remained long in his mind, and the scenes of his youth received their most complete embodiment in his later years.

The keynote of his art was solitude. He loved the lonely places of the earth—the mountains, the sand dunes of the Great Lakes, the bare New England coast. The country in his pictures is austere, its contours low and wide, giving a sense of great space, and the light is diffused and brooding. The prevailing mood is a penetrating melancholy. Martin's method was essentially objective, without the easy emotionalism of Inness, but it resulted in the expression of a personal emotion more intense.

He loved the bare backbone of the earth, and his pictures were solidly constructed, giving a feeling of permanence and inevitability. One feels that these hills and rocks and trees are there for eternity. Much thoughtfulness and sensitiveness went into the composition of his works. His sense of design, though somewhat limited by a naturalistic viewpoint, was authentic—a characteristic too often lacking in the American art of his time. In the beginning his color had been sombre, but as he matured it gained variety and

life. A skillful division of tones, like the broken color of the impressionists though on a more reserved scale, gave it a subdued richness and luminosity. His color had an affinity to music, and within a restricted range its harmonies were more subtle and distinguished than those of Inness.

At no time in his life was Martin successful financially; his work was too serious, too lacking in the spectacular or the obviously pretty. The last ten years of his life, from fifty to sixty, were years of poverty, neglect, and the progressive failing of his eyesight. But his command of his art was now complete, and to this period belong his greatest works, painted not from nature but from memory.

Inness, Wyant and Martin had liberated landscape painting from outworn traditions. The last third of the century, a period of great artistic expansion in this country, saw the general acceptance of landscape as an art form, and a large increase in the number of artists who practised it, including many whose chief work lay in other fields, such as Fuller, Hunt, La Farge, Eakins, Duveneck and Chase. By this time there was a far broader field for individualism in American art than there had ever been before, and the new exponents of landscape represented a wide variety of viewpoints.

In one of the most original of them, Winslow Homer, we find a new note—that of naturalism. Homer was even more self-made than Martin. Going abroad only twice in his life and then as a mature artist rather than a student, he owed little to the art of others. He was an essentially simple and powerful character, drawing his inspiration directly from reality. His viewpoint was objective; he did not try to express his own emotions, but simply to let nature speak through him. The poetry of nature interested him less than her power and her inexhaustible freshness. A great wanderer and sportsman, Homer hated cities and loved the aspects of nature that have been least touched by man—the ocean, the forest, the mountains. By this time the wilderness that Cole had celebrated was fast disappearing, and Homer's love of it was a deliberate turning of his back on civilization, and a return to that primeval wildness that was dying out of the modern world. He was probably the last great interpreter of the American wilderness. His miraculous watercolors, the first-hand records of a man who shared the primitive joy of the hunter and the fisherman, have nothing about them of the literary vision of Cole. Homer does not try to impress us with vast panoramas; he takes us right into the heart of the wilderness, shows it to us close up, with the vividness of an art direct out of reality. A wide gap separates this realistic intensity from the ample rhetoric of the Hudson River school. Any loss in completeness has been more than compensated by a gain in freshness and power.

When he was nearly fifty Homer left the city for good and lived the rest of his life in the solitude of the Maine coast. Here his chief subject became the sea. Not the sea in its halcyon moods, but in its stormiest aspects. His dominant theme became the play of natural forces—the mass and movement of waves, the solidity of rocks, the long rhythm of combers emerging out of the gray immensity of the ocean, the menace of fog and storm. These marines have some of the force and freshness of nature herself. They embody the power of the ocean and its vast loneliness, as no other modern painter has done.

At the opposite extreme from Homer's naturalism was the purely imaginary landscape of Albert Ryder. Living in New York City within sound of elevated trains and street cars, Ryder pictured a world that had no direct relation to actuality, a world of fantasy. In all his themes landscape played a leading part. In *Macbeth and the Witches* the unearthly heath was more than a mere setting for the drama, it was the chief actor, the figures being little more than an embodiment of the spirit of the place. It was the landscape of the unconscious mind that Ryder painted. This interior world seems to have been more real to him than the reality around him.

Memory must have played a large part in his art. One meets reminiscences of his childhood in New Bedford—the sea, the moors of Martha's Vineyard, the pastures with their stone walls and grazing cattle—all transformed by the peculiar magic of his mind into something rare and strange. The sea has always meant much to New England, and it seemed to haunt the unconscious mind of this latter-day New Englander. In his favorite image of a lonely ship sailing the moonlit waters, Ryder expressed something about the sea that not even Homer had—not the sea in any particular time or place or weather, but the sea as it lives in the mind of man, a symbol of space and eternity; and the boat as an emblem of man's wayfaring life. This symbolism set him apart from almost every other painter of his day.

Ryder himself said: "The artist should fear to become the slave of detail. He should strive to express his thought and not the surface of it. What avails a storm-cloud accurate in form and color if the storm is not therein?" Yet there is great truth of observation in his work. He had a habit of going out at twilight and taking long walks in the country around New York, sometimes not returning until dawn; and he once told a friend that on these walks he "soaked in the moonlight" that later appeared in his pictures. His skies with their strange cloud shapes were carefully observed, and few have painted the colors of night and moonlight so accurately. These tiny nocturnes have a sense of infinite space. The world Ryder created, remote as it is from actu-

ality, possesses physical properties of solidity and depth which give these dream landscapes an intense reality.

Closely allied to Ryder was Albert Blakelock. As Ryder was haunted by the sea, Blakelock was haunted by the forest. It was as if the old background of the American settler, the primeval forest, with its mystery and terror and its wild beauty, had become part of his unconscious mind. Here we find reappearing that obsession with the wilderness that had marked Cole and his followers, but now freed of its specific content and transformed into something existing only in the mind of the artist.

IV

In France, in the meantime, impressionism had been born. "Light is the principal person in a picture," said Manet. Sunlight and air and outdoor color were becoming the new subjects of painting.

In America there had already been experiments in the same direction, independent of French influence. About 1867 John La Farge painted *Paradise Valley*, of which he later said: "I undertook a combination of a large variety of problems which were not in the line of my fellow artists here, nor did I know of anyone in Europe who at that time undertook them. . . . I had to choose a special moment of the day and a special kind of weather at a special time of the year." The picture, with its flood of light bathing the entire scene, was a remarkable precursor of impressionism. La Farge's teacher William Morris Hunt had long been telling his students, "Go out into the sunshine, and try to get some of its color and light. Then come back here and see how black we are all painting." Hunt himself in 1877 painted in one afternoon his *Gloucester Harbor*, of which he said with characteristic enthusiasm that he had at last painted a picture "with *light* in it." Winslow Homer's early work, from 1864 on, had many curious parallels to the contemporary style of Monet. In general our artists shared in the age's growing preoccupation with such problems, working them out in their own way.

But the actual French impressionist movement, though fully developed by 1870, had no direct influence in this country until fifteen or twenty years later. This in spite of the fact that Paris had become the Mecca of our art students, that one of the original impressionists was an American, Mary Cassatt, and that Whistler was their intimate friend. There had been a similar lag in the Barbizon influence here, and indeed most foreign movements of the nineteenth century. All of the future American impressionists went

through thoroughly academic training before they finally discovered the new movement. They came to it gradually, and by quite different paths.

Theodore Robinson had gone to Paris as early as 1877, but it was not until he returned there in 1884 that he discovered Monet and moved to Giverny, working under the master's direct influence. A dependence on the older painter is obvious in his sensitive art, with its delicate color and divided tones, but it always retained a feeling of nature seen directly, with a fresh clear eye. His innovations were just beginning to receive recognition in America when his frail health gave way and he died at the age of forty-four.

Twachtman was trained in the Munich tradition of dark warm color, broad brushwork, and a liberal use of bitumen. His evolution towards impressionism was gradual, a matter of personal growth as much as outside influence. In his case the new style was modified by the poetic and decorative turn of his mind. Whistler's aestheticism affected him as much as Monet's realism. An essentially lyrical painter, wayward and tender, he loved the evanescent and fluid aspects of nature—flowing water with its changing color, snow with its creation of a delicate gray and white world, the misty hues of early spring. His highly personal art, with its affinities to music, was one of the most original products of the movement.

Weir had studied in Paris as early as 1873, but for many years he worked in a comparatively dark key, evolving gradually towards outdoors and a higher palette. About 1890 he definitely espoused impressionism, and his prestige had much to do with popularizing the movement. With him the change was not in viewpoint so much as in tonality and technique. His later landscapes revealed the same quietly idyllic feeling for the farms and pastures of Connecticut that had marked his work from the first, but now transposed into a higher key, muted and silvery, avoiding the full chromatic brilliancy of the new school.

The most orthodox American impressionist was the youngest of the group, Childe Hassam. He was the only one who consistently used a pure palette and broken tones and who habitually painted the full effect of sunlight. His work, however, always retained a distinctively native flavor, representing an American, even a New England version of impressionism. The most varied of the school in subjects, in landscape he was devoted to the long-settled, trim East, with its summer resorts and its pleasant old towns and white churches.

American impressionism did not have its basis in naturalism, as did that of France. The movement had not originated in this country, and by the time it reached us it had been transformed into a lyrical and decorative art

far removed from realism. Most of its American exponents were poetic rather than structural artists, and their special contributions were delicacy and a highly personal quality.

By this time the American art world was far larger and more cosmopolitan than in the first half of the century, affording room for many diverse viewpoints and personalities. The contributions of impressionism had been taken over by many artists who did not follow literally the style or technique of the new movement but modified it to suit their individual temperaments. Almost every leading artist of the time was affected to some extent by the new viewpoint. By the end of the century the love of outdoors and sunlight and pure color, and the whole spirit of enjoyment of the sensuous beauty of the world, which was the essence of impressionism, had spread over the whole field of American art and become the dominant spirit of an entire generation.

LLOYD GOODRICH

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CATALOGUE

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1 MARKET STREET PERMANENT BRIDGE 1812

Lent by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

RALPH EARL 1751-1801

2 LOOKING EAST FROM LEICESTER HILLS 1800

Lent by the Worcester Art Museum

JOHN TRUMBULL 1756-1843

3 VIEW OF NIAGARA FALLS FROM THE UPPER BANK, BRITISH SIDE
about 1808

Lent by the Wadsworth Atheneum

FRANCIS GUY 1760-1820

4 OLD BALTIMORE

Lent by Mr. Pleasants Pennington

5 OLD BALTIMORE

Lent by Mr. Pleasants Pennington

WASHINGTON ALLSTON 1779-1843

6 ELIJAH FED BY THE RAVENS 1817 *Lent by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts*

7 RISING OF A THUNDERSTORM AT SEA

Lent by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts

THOMAS BIRCH 1779-1851

8 FAIRMOUNT FROM LEMON HILL

Lent by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

9 A WINTER SCENE IN PENNSYLVANIA 1835

Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

EDWARD HICKS 1780-1849

10 THE HOME OF WILLIAM PENN 1848

Lent by Mr. Owen Winston

SAMUEL F. B. MORSE 1791-1872

11 VIEW FROM APPLE HILL, COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK about 1828-1829

Lent by Mr. John A. Dix

12 THE CHAPEL OF THE VIRGIN AT SUBIACO 1830

Lent by the Worcester Art Museum

THOMAS DOUGHTY 1793-1856

13 IN NATURE'S WONDERLAND 1835

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JOHN NEAGLE 1796-1865

14 VIEW ON THE SCHUYLKILL 1827

Lent by the Art Institute of Chicago

ASHER B. DURAND 1796-1886

15 WOODLAND INTERIOR

Lent by the Addison Gallery of American Art

16 FOREST LANDSCAPE

Lent by the Brooklyn Museum

17 LANDSCAPE

Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

HENRY INMAN 1801-1846

18 A PICNIC IN THE CATSKILLS

Lent by the Brooklyn Museum

THOMAS COLE 1801-1848

19 VIEW OF THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

Lent by the Wadsworth Atheneum

Painted from sketches made in 1828

20 THE CATSKILL MOUNTAINS 1833

Lent by the Cleveland Museum of Art

WILLIAM S. MOUNT 1807-1868

21 LONG ISLAND FARMHOUSES

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

22 AN ARTIST AND HIS WIFE IN A LANDSCAPE 1851

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GEORGE CALEB BINGHAM 1811-1879

23 FISHING ON THE MISSISSIPPI 1851

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24 CONWAY VALLEY 1854

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25 WHITE MOUNTAIN SCENERY 1859

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26 THE TROUT POOL

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27 DRIVING HOME THE GEESE 1883

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28 NIAGARA FALLS 1860

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29 CARD PLAYING AT FRYEBURG about 1855

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36 CHURCH, WESTFIELD FARMS

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37 INDIAN ENCAMPMENT, SHOSHONE VILLAGE 1860

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JAMES A. McNEILL WHISTLER 1834-1903

38 THE COAST OF BRITTANY 1861

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39 OLD BATTERSEA BRIDGE: BROWN AND SILVER

Lent by the Addison Gallery of American Art

JOHN LA FARGE 1835-1910

40 PARADISE VALLEY, NEWPORT about 1866-1868

Lent by Miss Mary B. Lothrop

41 SCENE IN TAHITI probably about 1890

Lent by Mr. Robert Laurent

ALEXANDER H. WYANT 1836-1892

42 MOHAWK VALLEY 1866

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HOMER D. MARTIN 1836-1897

43 LAKE SANFORD 1870

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44 ONTARIO SAND DUNES 1887

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45 WESTCHESTER HILLS about 1887

Lent by Mrs. Roger Straus

46 THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER AT GANANOQUE, ONTARIO 1893

Lent by Mr. William T. Cresmer

47 ADIRONDACK SCENERY 1895

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WINSLOW HOMER 1836-1910

48 LANDSCAPE

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49 LANDSCAPE 1876

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50 COAST IN WINTER 1890

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57 MOONLIGHT

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58 MOONLIGHT

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JOSEPH PICKETT 1848–1918

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WILLIAM M. CHASE 1849–1916

60 IN THE HARBOR about 1889

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ABBOTT H. THAYER 1849–1922

61 LANDSCAPE WITH CATTLE 1879

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THEODORE ROBINSON 1852–1896

62 WOMAN SEWING about 1890

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63 HALT ON THE ROAD about 1890

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65 BUILDING A DAM, SHETUCKET

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66 THE FISHING PARTY

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JOHN H. TWACHTMAN 1853–1902

67 THE LITTLE BRIDGE about 1892

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68 WATERFALL IN YELLOWSTONE

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69 LANDSCAPE

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JOHN SINGER SARGENT 1856–1925

70 IN THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS 1879

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ANONYMOUS

79 HUDSON RIVER SCENE

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ANONYMOUS

80 RUNAWAY HORSE

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ANONYMOUS

81 INDIANS, SALMON FALLS, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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LOOKING EAST FROM LEICESTER HILLS, BY RALPH EARL.

Courtesy of Worcester Art Museum



ELIJAH FED BY THE RAVENS, BY WASHINGTON ALLSTON

Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



VIEW FROM APPLE HILL, COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK, BY SAMUEL F. B. MORSE

Courtesy of Mr. John A. Dix



VIEW ON THE SCHUYLKILL, BY JOHN NEAGLE

Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago



A PICNIC IN THE CATSKILLS, BY HENRY INMAN

Courtesy of Brooklyn Museum



RUNAWAY HORSE, Anonymous



THE CATSKILL MOUNTAINS, BY THOMAS COLE

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WHITE MOUNTAIN SCENERY, BY JOHN F. KENSETT

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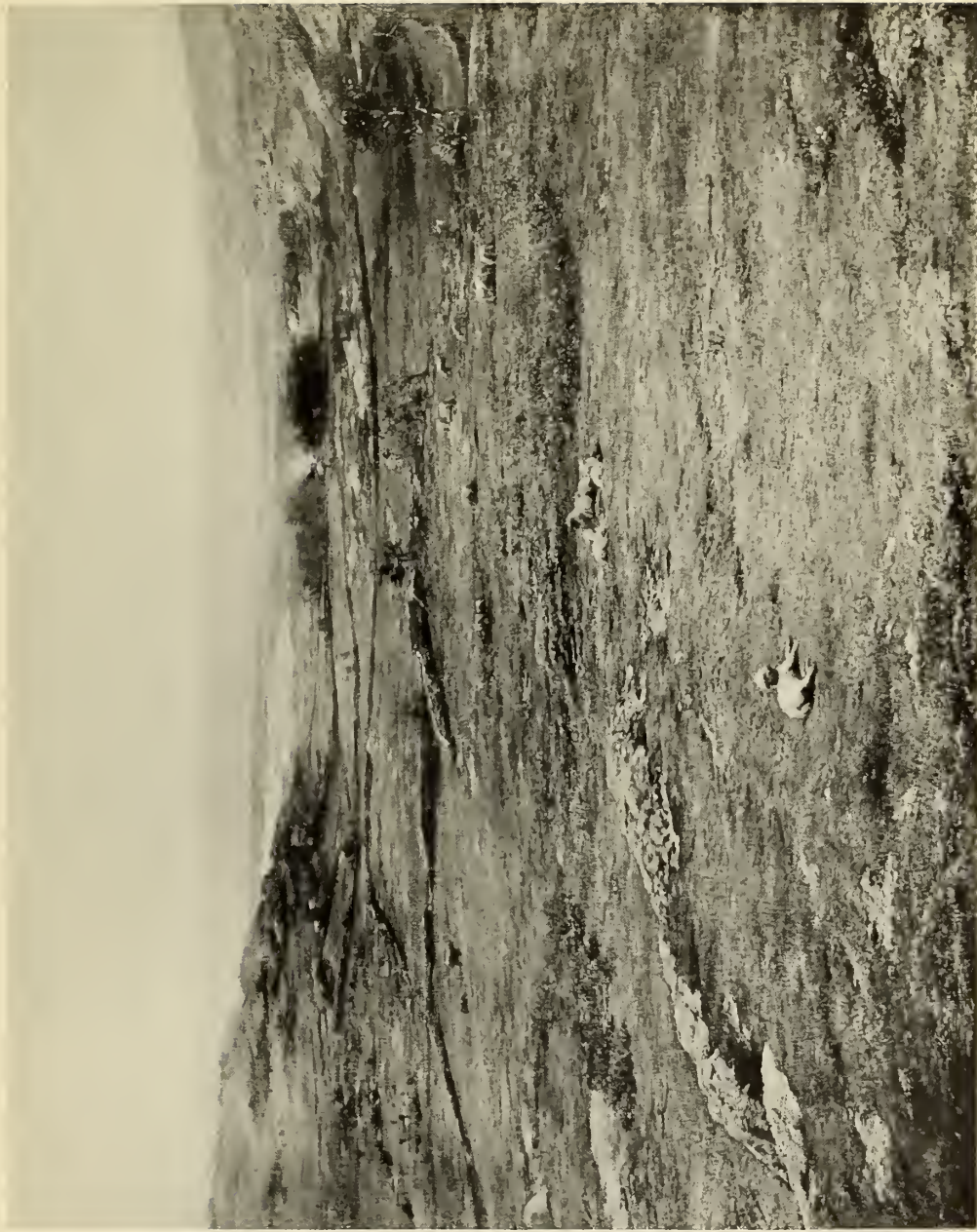
THE CLOUDED SUN, BY GEORGE INNESS

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OLD BATTERSEA BRIDGE: BROWN AND SILVER, BY JAMES A. McNEILL WHISTLER

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PARADISE VALLEY, NEWPORT, BY JOHN LA FARGE

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THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER AT GANANOQUE, ONTARIO, BY HOMER D. MARTIN

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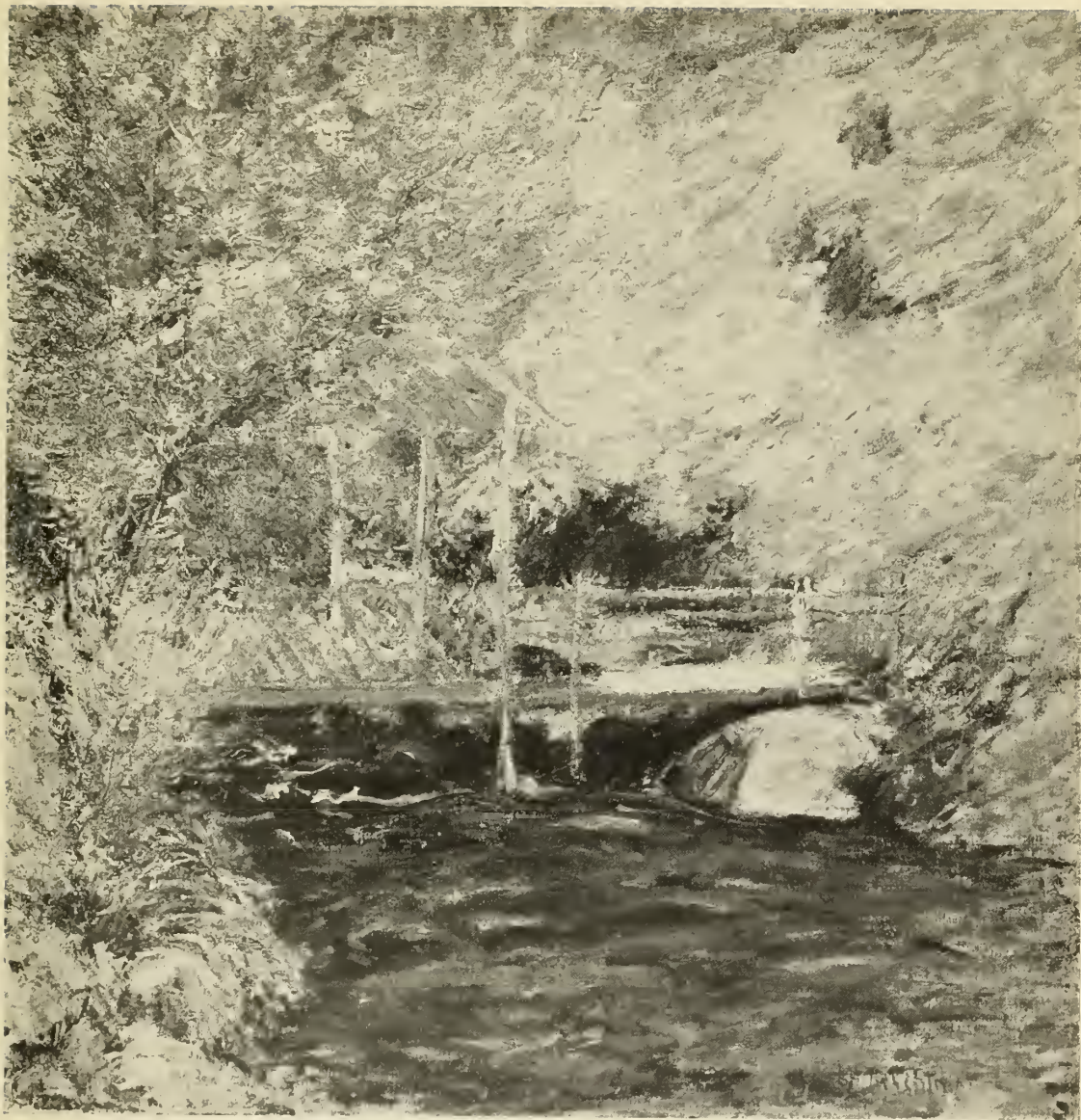
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